

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SANA 03217 011818Z
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S E C R E T SANA 3217

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, YE, SA
SUBJ: BACKGROUND ON MILITARY SUPPLY TO YAR

1. SAUDI AGREEMENT TO FINANCE YEMENI SALES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM US AND FRANCE WAS CONCLUDED IN JUNE 1976, AND HAS BEEN FAIR POLITICAL SUCCESS SINCE THEN. IF HAS, AT ANY RATE, PROVIDED ALTERNATIVE TO SOVIET COMMITMENT TO SECURITY OF YAR AND AVERTED LARGE-SCALE INFLUX OF NEW SOVIET WEAPONS. AT SAME TIME, IT HAS BEEN ADMINISTRATIVE DISASTER AND ONE RPT ONE OF THE REASONS WHY YEMENI ARMY IS WEAKER NOW THAN EVERY BEFORE IN LAST DECADE.

2. THERE ARE, OF COURSE, MANY REASONS WHY WESTERN WEAPONS HAVE NOT RPT NOT MADE MUCH DIFFERENCE HERE. FIRST IS THAT VERY FEW HAVE ARRIVED IN FIRST TWO YEARS SINCE SIGNING. US DELIVERY SCHEDULES WERE -- EXCEPT FOR VEHICLES -- EXPRESSED IN YEARS; FRENCH, WHILE NOT SO LONG, DID NOT GET THEIR APC'S AND ARMORED CARS HERE MUCH MORE QUICKLY.

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SECRET

PAGE 02 SANA 03217 011818Z

YEMENI INCOMPETENCE IN MILITARY PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION IS MASSIVE FACTOR IN IRRITATING IMPACT OF DELIVERIES UP TO NOW, OF COURSE. MOREOVER, YEMENI ABILITY TO FIND AND SEND PEOPLE FOR TRAINING TO US AND FRANCE AND SAUDI ARABIA IS STARTLINGLY SMALL.

3. HOWEVER, SAUDIS HAVE PLAYED POLITICS WITH PROGRAM

TRYING TO EXACT ADVANTAGES FOR EVERY DELIVERY AND DRIVING YEMENIS TO VERY DIFFICULT CHOICES -- LIKE EXPULSION OF SOVIETS -- WHEN SAUDIS TIES TO TRIBES WERE STILL STRONG AND LEFTIST REACTION FROM SOUTH YEMEN WOULD HAVE FOUND YEMENI ARMY IN WEAKENED CONDITION AND DEPENDENT ON HIGHLY QUESTIONABLE SAUDI DETERRENT. SAUDI INCOMPETENCE SHOULD NOT BE UNDER ESTIMATED AS ELEMENT IN INNUMERABLE PRACTICAL PROBLEMS WITH PROGRAM TO DATE, EVEN THOUGH SAUDIS SAY -- WITH SOME BITTERNESS -- THAT FAILURES TO DATE CAN BE ATTRIBUTED ONLY TO YEMENI DUPLICITY AND INDISCIPLINE.

4. BECAUSE WE WANTED TO KEEP SAUDIS OUT FRONT, WE REPEATEDLY SHIED AWAY FROM PRESSING SAUDIS TO PREPARE PRACTICAL REMEDIES FOR PROGRAM PROBLEMS. SAUDIS FENDED OFF SUCH EFFORTS AS WERE MADE. THEY DIDN'T WANT TO GET WHIPSAWED BY US-YEMENI COMBINATION. SOME SAY SAUDI MILITARY WANTED KEEP YEMENIS WEAK. IN ANY CASE, THIS WAS THEIR PROGRAM, AND THEY WANTED TO GET CREDIT EVEN IF IT SADDLED THEM WITH MANY BURDENS. THEY PROFESSED NOT RPT NOT TO BE DAUNTED BY FACT THAT THIS WAS ONLY PROGRAM IN WORLD IN WHICH THEY RECEIVED, DISTRIBUTED, AND MAINTAINED EQUIPMENT AND, IN ADDITION, TOOK REPSONSIBILITY FOR ADVISING YARG ON RE-ORGANIZATION OF ARMY AND RE-TRAINING OF OFFICERS AND MEN IN TACTICS AND EQUIPMENT OF NEW SORT. (THEY DIDN'T EVEN DO ALL THIS IN SAUDI ARABIA, CRITICS SOMETIMES REMARKED, AND IN YEMEN THEY WERE UP AGAINST OBSTRUCTIONISM AND COMPETITION OF MUCH MORE SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 SANA 03217 011818Z

NUMEROUS, WELL-ENTRENCHED, BETTER-TRAINED SOVIET MILITARY MISSION.)

5. THIS IS ALL PRELUDE TO SAYING THAT ANY US DESIRE TO SEE EXISTING PROGRAM PROSECUTED MORE EFFECTIVELY DEPENDS ON PRIOR AGREEMENT WITH SAUDIS -- STARTING WITH SULTAN AND RUNNING THROUGH MODA -- TO ADMIT US TO NEW ROLE. WE CAN AND CERTAINLY WANT TO DESIGN THIS ROLE TO KEEP SAUDIS OUT FRONT, MAKE SURE THEY GET CREDIT. BUT TO MEET THREAT FROM SOUTH, THEY CAN NO LONGER WITHHOLD INFORMATION, TURN AWAY SUGGESTIONS ON PRACTICAL LEVELS, USE PROGRAM FOR ALL MANNER OF SMALL POLITICAL PURPOSES. TO THIS END WE WOULD SUGGEST AS KEYSTONE TO ANY NEW US EFFORT AMENDMENT TO MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WHICH SIGNED AT OUT-SET OF PROGRAM BETWEEN US AND SAUDIS. MEMORANDUM NOW BLOCKS US ROLE. IT SHOULD PROVIDE FOR REGULAR AND BROAD REVIEW AND DECISION-MAKING CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN USMTM (WITH DATT SANA IN ATTENDANCE) AND MODA ABOUT PROGRAM.

6. SEPTTEL SUGGESTS SPECIFIC STEPS TO PROVIDE EARLY INCREASED COMBAT CAPABILITY. WE SEE NONE RPT NONE OF THESE STEPS AS VIABLE WITHOUT PRIOR US-SAUDI AGREEMENT AS OUTLINED ABOVE.

RANSOM

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